

for those who earn an associate degree or certification from the American Association for Medical Transcription.

There should be little or no change in employment of court reporters. Despite increasing numbers of civil and criminal cases, budget constraints limit the ability of Federal, State, and local courts to expand. The growing number of conventions, conferences, depositions, seminars, and similar meetings in which proceedings are recorded should create limited demand for court reporters. Although many of these events are videotaped, a written transcript must still be created for legal purposes or if the proceedings are to be published. In addition, the trend to provide instantaneous written captions for the deaf and hearing-impaired should strengthen demand for stenocaptioners. Because of their relatively high salaries, keen competition should exist for court reporter positions; those with certification should enjoy the best job prospects.

The widespread use of dictation machines has greatly reduced the need for office stenographers. Audio recording equipment and the use of personal computers by managers and other professionals should continue to further decrease the demand for these workers.

Earnings

Court reporters, medical transcriptionists, and stenographers had median annual earnings of \$25,430 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$21,060 and \$31,470; the lowest paid 10 percent earned less than \$17,060; and the highest paid 10 percent earned over \$39,070. Median 1997 annual salaries in the industries employing the largest number of these workers were:

Local government, except education and hospitals	\$29,300
State government, except education and hospitals	29,000
Mailing, reproduction, and stenographic services	28,600
Hospitals	23,500
Offices and clinics of medical doctors	22,600

Court reporters usually earn higher salaries than stenographers or medical transcriptionists, and many supplement their income by doing additional freelance work. According to a National Court Reporters Association survey of its members, average annual earnings for court reporters were about \$54,000 in 1999. According to the 1999 HayGroup survey about three-quarters of healthcare institutions paid their medical transcriptionists for time worked, with average salaries ranging from \$20,000 to \$30,000 annually. About a fifth of those respondents used a combination of payment methods (time worked plus incentive for production), with average salaries ranging from \$28,000 to \$36,000 annually. Regardless of specialty, earnings depend on education, experience, and geographic location.

Related Occupations

A number of other workers type, record information, and process paperwork. Among these are administrative assistants, bookkeepers, receptionists, secretaries, and human resource clerks. Other workers who provide medical and legal support include paralegals, medical assistants, and medical record technicians.

Sources of Additional Information

For information about careers, training, and certification in court reporting, contact:

☛ National Court Reporters Association, 8224 Old Courthouse Rd., Vienna, VA 22182. Internet: <http://www.verbatimreporters.com>

For information on a career as a medical transcriptionist, contact:

☛ American Association for Medical Transcription, P.O. Box 576187, Modesto, CA 95357. Internet: <http://www.aamt.org/aamt>

For information on a career as a federal court reporter, contact:

☛ United States Court Reporters Association, 1904 Marvel Lane, Liberty, MO 64068. Internet: <http://www.uscra.org>

State employment service offices can provide information about job openings for court reporters, medical transcriptionists, and stenographers.

Information Clerks

Significant Points

- Numerous job openings should arise for most types of information clerks due to employment growth and high turnover.
- A high school diploma or its equivalent is the most common educational requirement.
- Because many information clerks deal directly with the public, a professional appearance and pleasant personality are imperative.

Nature of the Work

Information clerks are found in nearly every industry in the Nation, gathering data and providing information to the public. The specific duties of these clerks vary as widely as the job titles they hold. *Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks*, for example, are a guest's first contact for check-in, check-out, and other services within hotels, motels, and resorts. *Interviewing and new account clerks*, found most often in medical facilities, research firms, and financial institutions, assist the public in completing forms, applications or questionnaires. *Receptionists* are often a visitor's or caller's first contact within an organization, providing information and routing calls. *Reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks* assist the public in making travel plans, reservations, and purchasing tickets for a variety of transportation services.

Although their day-to-day duties vary widely, most information clerks greet customers, guests, or other visitors. Many also answer telephones and either obtain information from or provide information to the public. Most information clerks use multiline telephones, fax machines, and personal computers. This section, which contains an overall discussion of information clerks, is followed by separate sections providing additional information on the four types of clerks identified above.

Working Conditions

Working conditions vary for different types of information clerks, but most clerks work in areas that are clean, well lit, and relatively quiet. This is especially true for information clerks who greet customers and visitors and usually work in highly visible areas that are furnished to make a good impression. Reservation agents and interviewing clerks who spend much of their day talking on the telephone, however, commonly work away from the public, often in large centralized reservation or phone centers. Because a number of agents or clerks may share the same work space, it may be crowded and noisy. Interviewing clerks may conduct surveys on the street, in shopping malls, or go door to door.

Although most information clerks work a standard 40-hour week, about 3 out of 10 work part time. Some high school and college students work part time as information clerks, after school or during vacations. Some jobs—such as those in the transportation industry, hospitals, and hotels, in particular—may require working evenings, late night shifts, weekends, and holidays. This is also the case for a growing number of new accounts clerks who work for large banks with call centers that are staffed around the clock. Interviewing clerks conducting surveys or other research may mainly work evenings or weekends. In general, employees with the least seniority tend to be assigned the less desirable shifts.

The work performed by information clerks may be repetitious and stressful. For example, many receptionists spend all day answering telephones while performing additional clerical or secretarial tasks. Reservation agents and travel clerks work under stringent time constraints or have quotas on the number of calls answered or reservations made. Additional stress is caused by technology that enables management to electronically monitor use of computer systems, tape record telephone calls, or limit the time spent on each call.

The work of hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks and transportation ticket agents also can be stressful when trying to serve the needs of difficult or angry customers. When flights are canceled, reservations mishandled, or guests are dissatisfied, these clerks must bear the brunt of the customers' anger. Hotel desk clerks and ticket agents may be on their feet most of the time, and ticket agents may have to lift heavy baggage. In addition, prolonged exposure to a video display terminal may lead to eye strain for the many information clerks who work with computers.

Employment

Information clerks held over 1.9 million jobs in 1998. The following tabulation shows employment for the individual occupations.

Receptionists	1,293,000
Interviewing and new account clerks	239,000
Reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks ..	218,000
Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks	159,000

Although information clerks are found in a variety of industries, employment is concentrated in hotels and motels, health services, banks and savings institutions, transportation, and firms providing business or real estate services.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Although hiring requirements for information clerk jobs vary from industry to industry, a high school diploma or its equivalent is the most common educational requirement. Increasingly, familiarity or experience with computers and good interpersonal skills are often equally important to employers. For new account clerk and airline reservation and ticket agent jobs, some college education may be preferred.

Many information clerks deal directly with the public, so a professional appearance and pleasant personality are important. A clear speaking voice and fluency in the English language also are essential because these employees frequently use the telephone or public address systems. Good spelling and computer literacy are often needed, particularly because most work involves considerable computer use. It also is increasingly helpful for those wishing to enter the lodging or travel industries to speak a foreign language fluently.

With the exception of airline reservation and transportation ticket agents, orientation and training for information clerks usually takes place on the job. For example, orientation for hotel and motel desk clerks usually includes an explanation of the job duties and information about the establishment, such as room locations and available services. New employees learn job tasks through on-the-job training under the guidance of a supervisor or an experienced clerk. They often need additional training in how to use the computerized reservation, room assignment, and billing systems and equipment. Most information clerks continue to receive instruction on new procedures and company policies after their initial training ends.

Receptionists usually receive on-the-job training which may include procedures for greeting visitors, operating telephone and computer systems, and distributing mail, fax, and parcel deliveries. Some employers look for applicants who already possess certain skills, such as prior computer and word processing experience, or previous formal education.

Most airline reservation and ticket agents learn their skills through formal company training programs. In a classroom setting, they learn company and industry policies, computer systems, and ticketing procedures. They also learn to use the airline's computer system to obtain information on schedules, seat availability, and fares; to reserve space for passengers; and to plan passenger itineraries. They must also become familiar with airport and airline code designations, regulations, and safety procedures, and may be tested on this knowledge. After completing classroom instruction, new agents work on the job with supervisors or experienced agents for a period of time. During this period, supervisors may monitor telephone conversations to improve the quality of customer service. Agents are expected to provide good service while limiting the time spent on each

call without being discourteous to customers. In contrast to the airlines, automobile clubs, bus lines, and railroads tend to train their ticket agents or travel clerks on the job through short in-house classes that last several days.

Most banks prefer to hire college graduates for new account clerk positions. Nevertheless, many new accounts clerks without college degrees start out as bank tellers and are promoted by demonstrating excellent communication skills and motivation to learn new skills. If a new accounts clerk has not been a teller before, he or she will often receive such training and work for several months as a teller. In both cases, new accounts clerks undergo formal training regarding the bank's procedures, products, and services.

Advancement for information clerks usually comes about either by transfer to a position with more responsibilities or by promotion to a supervisory position. Most companies fill office and administrative support supervisory and managerial positions by promoting individuals within their organization, so information clerks who acquire additional skills, experience, and training improve their advancement opportunities. Receptionists, interviewers, and new accounts clerks with word processing or other clerical skills may advance to a better paying job as a secretary or administrative assistant. Within the airline industry, a ticket agent may advance to lead worker on the shift.

Additional training is helpful in preparing information clerks for promotion. In the lodging industry, clerks can improve their chances for advancement by taking home or group study courses in lodging management, such as those sponsored by the Educational Institute of the American Hotel and Motel Association. In some industries—such as lodging, banking, or the airlines—workers commonly are promoted through the ranks. Positions such as airline reservation agent or hotel and motel desk clerk offer good opportunities for qualified workers to get started in the business. In a number of industries, a college degree may be required for advancement to management ranks.

Job Outlook

Overall employment of information clerks is expected grow about as fast as average for all occupations through 2008. In addition to many openings occurring as businesses and organizations expand, numerous job openings for information clerks will result from the need to replace experienced workers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force. Replacement needs are expected to be especially large in this occupation due to high turnover, as many young people work as information clerks for a few years before switching to other, higher paying jobs. The occupation is well suited to flexible work schedules, and many opportunities for part-time work will continue to be available, particularly as organizations attempt to cut labor costs by hiring more part-time or temporary workers.

The outlook for different types of information clerks is expected to vary in the coming decade. Economic growth and general business expansion are expected to stimulate faster than average growth among receptionists. Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks are expected to grow faster than the average, as the composition of the lodging industry changes and services provided by these workers expand. Employment of interviewing clerks will also grow faster than average as these workers benefit from rapid growth in the health services industry, while average growth is expected among new accounts clerks as more of their functions are provided electronically. Much of this growth, however, will be due to an increase in part-time and temporary jobs. Reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks are expected to grow more slowly than average due to productivity gains brought by technology and the increasing use of the Internet for travel services.

Earnings

Earnings vary widely by occupation and experience. Annual earnings ranged from less than \$11,750 for the lowest paid 10 percent of hotel clerks to over \$39,540 for the top 10 percent of reservation agents in 1998. Salaries of reservation and transportation ticket agents and

travel clerks tend to be significantly higher than for other information clerks, while hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks tend to earn quite a bit less, as the following tabulation of median annual earnings shows.

Reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks	\$22,120
New accounts clerks	21,340
Receptionists	18,620
Interviewing clerks	18,540
Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks	15,160

Earnings of hotel and motel desk clerks also vary considerably depending on the location, size, and type of establishment in which they work. For example, clerks at large luxury hotels and those located in metropolitan and resort areas generally pay clerks more than less exclusive or “budget” establishments and those located in less populated areas.

In early 1999, the Federal Government typically paid salaries ranging from \$16,400 to \$18,100 a year to beginning receptionists with a high school diploma or 6 months of experience. The average annual salary for all receptionists employed by the Federal Government was about \$22,700 in 1999.

In addition to their hourly wage, full-time information clerks who work evenings, nights, weekends, or holidays may receive shift differential pay. Some employers offer educational assistance to their employees. Reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks receive free or reduced rate travel on their company’s carriers for themselves and their immediate family and, in some companies, for friends.

Related Occupations

A number of other workers deal with the public, receive and provide information, or direct people to others who can assist them. Among these are dispatchers, security guards, bank tellers, guides, telephone operators, records processing clerks, counter and rental clerks, survey workers, and ushers and lobby attendants.

Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks

(O*NET 53808)

Nature of the Work

Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks perform a variety of services for guests of hotels, motels, and other lodging establishments. Regardless of the type of accommodation, most desk clerks have similar responsibilities. Primarily, they register arriving guests, assign rooms, and check guests out at the end of their stay. They also keep records of room assignments and other registration information on computers. When guests check out, they prepare and explain the charges, as well as process payments.

Front desk clerks are always in the public eye and, through their attitude and behavior, greatly influence the public’s impressions of the establishment. When answering questions about services, checkout times, the local community, or other matters of public interest, clerks must be courteous and helpful. Should guests report problems with their rooms, clerks contact members of the housekeeping or maintenance staff to correct them.

In some smaller hotels and motels, clerks may have a variety of additional responsibilities usually performed by specialized employees in larger establishments. In these places, the desk clerk is often responsible for all front office operations, information, and services. These clerks, for example, may perform the work of a bookkeeper, advance reservation agent, cashier, laundry attendant, and telephone switchboard operator.

Employment

Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks held about 159,000 jobs in 1998. This occupation is well suited to flexible work schedules, as over 1 in 4



Hotel and motel clerks register arriving guests.

desk clerks works part time. Because hotels and motels need to be staffed 24 hours a day, evening and weekend work is common.

Job Outlook

Employment of hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through 2008, as more hotels, motels, and other lodging establishments are built and occupancy rates rise. Job opportunities for hotel and motel desk clerks will result from an unusually high turnover rate. These openings occur each year as thousands of workers transfer to other occupations that offer better pay and advancement opportunities or simply leave the work force altogether. Opportunities for part-time work should continue to be plentiful, as nearly all front desks are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Employment of hotel and motel desk clerks should be favorably affected by an increase in business and leisure travel. Shifts in travel preference away from long vacations and toward long weekends and other, more frequent, shorter trips also should increase demand as this trend increases the total number of nights spent in hotels. The expansion of smaller, budget hotels relative to larger, luxury establishments reflects a change in the composition of the hotel and motel industry. As employment shifts from luxury hotels to more “no-frills” operations, the proportion of hotel desk clerks should increase in relation to staff such as waiters and waitresses and recreation workers.

However, the growing effort to cut labor costs while moving towards more efficient service is expected to slow the growth of desk clerk employment. The role of the front desk is changing as some of the more traditional duties are automated. New technologies automating check-in and check-out procedures now allow guests to bypass the front desk in many larger establishments, reducing staffing needs. The expansion of other technologies, such as interactive television and computer systems to dispense information, should further impact employment in the future as such services become more widespread.

Employment of desk clerks is sensitive to cyclical swings in the economy. During recessions, vacation and business travel declines and hotels and motels need fewer clerks. Similarly, desk clerk employment is affected by seasonal fluctuations in travel during high and low tourist seasons.

Sources of Additional Information

Information on working conditions, training requirements, and earnings appears in the *information clerks* introduction to this section.

Information on careers in the lodging industry, as well as information about professional development and training programs, may be obtained from:

✦ The Educational Institute of the American Hotel and Motel Association, P.O. Box 531126 Orlando, FL 32853-1126.

Internet: <http://www.ei-ahma.org>